

TRAINING STANDARDS COUNCIL INSPECTION REPORT
OCTOBER 2000

ADULT LEARNING INSPECTORATE REINSPECTION
JANUARY 2002

Western Power Training Limited



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Adult Learning Inspectorate

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) was established under the provisions of the *Learning and Skills Act 2000* to bring the inspection of all aspects of adult learning and work-based training within the remit of a single inspectorate. The ALI is responsible for inspecting a wide range of government-funded learning, including:

- ◆ work-based training for all people over 16
- ◆ provision in further education colleges for people aged 19 and over
- ◆ the University for Industry's **learn**direct provision
- ◆ adult and community learning
- ◆ training given by the Employment Service under the New Deals.

Inspections are carried out in accordance with the *Common Inspection Framework* by teams of full-time inspectors and part-time associate inspectors who have knowledge of, and experience in, the work which they inspect. All providers are invited to nominate a senior member of their staff to participate in the inspection as a team member.

Grading

In summarising their judgements about the quality of provision in curriculum or occupational areas and about the quality of leadership and management, including quality assurance and equality of opportunity, inspectors use a five-point scale. The descriptors for the five grades are:

- ◆ grade 1 – outstanding
- ◆ grade 2 – good
- ◆ grade 3 – satisfactory
- ◆ grade 4 – unsatisfactory
- ◆ grade 5 – very weak.

SUMMARY

The original inspection of Western Power Training Limited was carried out by the Training Standards Council's inspectors. The inspection resulted in a less than satisfactory grade being awarded for quality assurance. This area has been reinspected against the requirements of the *Common Inspection Framework* by the Adult Learning Inspectorate, which replaced the Training Standards Council on 1 April 2001. The section of the original report dealing with quality assurance has been replaced with the findings of the reinspection. Also, the report summary, report introduction and introduction to the inspection findings have been updated and reflect the findings of the reinspection. Sections of the report, dealing with areas which have not been reinspected, have been left in their original form. The amended inspection report is published on the Adult Learning Inspectorate's website (www.ali.gov.uk).

Western Power Training Limited provides good training in electrical installation and distribution. The off-the-job training resources are of a particularly high standard and offer a range of opportunities for learners to develop their skills. All learners are employed and retention rates for both training programmes are high. The organisation places strong emphasis on equal opportunities issues, but there is no monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace and no use of data to improve performance. Western Power Training Limited provides effective pastoral support for its learners and a good employer induction, but has a weak progress review system. Management of training is satisfactory and the training provider places particular emphasis on health and safety matters. The poor co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training, identified at the original inspection, has now been resolved. At the original inspection, quality assurance arrangements were less than satisfactory, with weaknesses particularly in the monitoring and evaluation of training. The weaknesses identified have been rectified. Western Power Training Limited has made significant improvements to its quality assurance procedures, but still lacks a cohesive framework for its modern apprenticeship programme.

GRADES

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS	GRADE
Construction	2

GENERIC AREAS	GRADE
Equal opportunities	3
Trainee support	3
Management of training	3
Quality assurance	4

REINSPECTION	GRADE
Quality assurance	3

KEY STRENGTHS

- ◆ good off-the-job training
- ◆ extremely well-qualified and highly experienced training staff
- ◆ particularly good achievement and retention rates
- ◆ thorough equal opportunities policy
- ◆ good employer induction
- ◆ effective staff review and development process
- ◆ effective use of work-based assessors
- ◆ good monitoring of learners' NVQ progress

KEY WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow development of key skills training
- ◆ insufficient progress towards NVQ achievement
- ◆ insufficient review and evaluation of equal opportunities
- ◆ inadequate learner review process
- ◆ no cohesive quality assurance framework for modern apprenticeship programmes
- ◆ incomplete self-assessment process

INTRODUCTION

1. Western Power Distribution (WPD) is a regional electricity distribution company, which is part of the Southern Company Group of the United States of America. WPD's head office is in Bristol, with 13 operational sites throughout the southwest of England. Technical training for WPD is co-ordinated by its training department, Western Power Training Limited (WPT), which is based in Taunton, Somerset. WPT is also subcontracted to deliver training for a large employer based in Reading. At the time of the original inspection, WPT had contracts with PROSPER, Wiltshire and Swindon Training and Enterprise Council (TEC) and Somerset TEC. At the time of reinspection, the contracts are with the Somerset and Wiltshire Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs).

2. All of the practical off-the-job training is provided at WPT's main training centre in Taunton. Additional qualifications are offered and taught using open learning facilities. They are validated by a college of further education located in the north of England. At present, WPT offers two modern apprenticeship programmes. At the time of the original inspection, there were 27 learners on the electricity distribution and transmission programme and 42 learners on the electrical installation engineering modern apprenticeship programme. At the time of reinspection, there are 32 learners on the electricity distribution and transmission programme and 26 on the electrical installation programme.

3. One of the major influences on the electricity supply industry has been the opening of the electricity market to competition, which was completed in May 1999. During the period 1991-97, there was a considerable decline in the production and distribution of electricity business units. The decline of units in the southwestern region was 43.1 per cent, compared with the national decline of 2.7 per cent. During the past two years of this period, this changed to a slight increase of 4.8 per cent in the southwest, compared with an increase of 5.1 per cent in the United Kingdom as a whole.

4. At the time of the original inspection, Devon and Cornwall had an unemployment level of 4.5 per cent. In Somerset, the ratio was 2.3 per cent and in Wiltshire and Swindon the proportion was less than 2 per cent. This compared with a national average of 3 per cent. By the time of the reinspection, unemployment levels for September 2001 were down to 2.7 per cent in Devon and Cornwall, 1.8 per cent in Somerset and 1.4 per cent in Wiltshire and Swindon. The national average at the time of the reinspection was 2.9 per cent. There is a minority ethnic population of 0.5 per cent in Devon and Cornwall. In Somerset, it is 0.54 per cent and in Wiltshire and Swindon the proportion is 1.68 per cent. All areas have a minority ethnic population ratio well below the United Kingdom average of 5.49 per cent. In 1999, the proportion of school leavers in Devon and Cornwall achieving five or more general certificates of secondary education (GCSEs) at grade C or above was 47.5 per cent, compared with the national

average of 47.9 per cent. In Somerset, the proportion was 52.7 per cent and in Wiltshire and Swindon it was 51.9 per cent. By the time of the reinspection, the proportion of school leavers in Devon and Cornwall in 2001 achieving five or more GCSEs at grade C or above was 52 per cent, compared with the national average of 47.9 per cent. In Somerset, the ratio was 55 per cent and in Wiltshire and Swindon it was 52 per cent.

INSPECTION FINDINGS

5. WPT produced its first self-assessment report in 2000, following notification of the forthcoming Training Standards Council (TSC) inspection. The training support manager produced the report. There was no contribution from the training staff. Training and assessment, learners' achievements and resources, were all graded separately. Sixty-one per cent of learners were following the electrical installation programme, the remainder were training in electricity distribution. It was agreed to report on the training provision under the occupational area of construction. Inspectors agreed with the self-assessment grades given for the occupational area and one of the generic areas. However, WPT did not identify some of the key weaknesses. In the other three generic areas, inspectors gave lower grades than those the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report used for reinspection did not have any strengths or weaknesses identified for quality assurance and no grade was awarded by WPT. The self-assessment report detailed the progress with weaknesses identified at the original inspection. Training staff, mentors and assessors had little involvement with the self-assessment process and did not receive a copy when it was completed.

6. The original inspection was carried out by a team of three inspectors, who spent a total of 13 days at WPT during October and November 2000. They visited six workplace depots, interviewed 17 learners and six workplace supervisors, and had discussions with the training provider's staff. Inspectors also examined policies and procedures, learners' files and portfolios, as well as assessment and verification files and documents. Three training sessions were observed, all of which were awarded a grade 2.

7. The reinspection was carried out by two inspectors, who spent a total of four days at WPT in January 2002. They visited five work placements, interviewed seven learners and four workplace supervisors, and had discussions with the training provider's staff. Inspectors also examined a range of documents, including learners' portfolios, the company's plans, policies and procedures, the self-assessment report and awarding body reports. Two training sessions were observed. Both were awarded a grade 3 on the seven-point scale.

OCCUPATIONAL AREAS

Construction

Grade 2

8. WPT is based in Taunton and is the training department of WPD. WPT carries out training and assessment for a large electrical installation contractor as well as for its own apprentices. In the case of both companies, apprentices work at various sites across southern England. There are 69 apprentices on the construction programme, all of whom are modern apprentices and are employed. Twenty-seven modern apprentices are working towards the electricity distribution and transmission national vocational qualifications (NVQs) at level 2 and 42 are following the electrical installation modern apprenticeship programme at NVQ level 2. Electricity distribution and transmission apprentices specialise in specific skills, such as linesman, jointing or fitting, in their final phase of training. All apprentices are required to study for further education qualifications during their modern apprenticeship, which they do through open learning. This training is delivered by a college of further education based in the north of England. Apprentices attend off-the-job training on a block-release basis at WPT's specialised training centre. Both practical and theory work is given at this centre. The assessment of apprentices takes place on site as well as in the training centre in Taunton. All apprentices are assigned a work-based mentor by their employer to support them while they work towards completion of their apprenticeship. Apprentice retention rates range from 85 to 100 per cent. In 1998, WPD received awards for their management of health and safety systems. The self-assessment report identified many strengths and some weaknesses. However, these strengths and weaknesses related to training and assessment, apprentices' achievements and resources, rather than the occupational area as a whole. Many of the strengths were considered to be no more than normal practice, or belonged to a generic area. Some strengths and weaknesses were correctly identified. Inspectors found additional strengths and weaknesses and agreed with the grade given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ particularly good off-the-job training
- ◆ excellent training centre resources
- ◆ training staff's exceptional range of qualifications and experience
- ◆ good achievement rates for academic qualifications
- ◆ good retention rates

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ slow development of key skills
- ◆ insufficient progress in NVQ achievement for some apprentices
- ◆ missed opportunities for assessment by observation in the workplace

9. Off-the-job training at the training centre is particularly good. The content of the training programme is well planned and well structured with lesson plans, handouts and transparencies available for all areas of training. Apprentices have a clear understanding of the content of each of the block release programmes and how they relate to their job. The teaching of practical skills is good and apprentices have every opportunity to practise and improve these skills. Assignments given to apprentices are well designed to ensure that their practical and technical skills are developed to the required standard.

10. There are extremely good resources at the training centre for both the electrical installation and the electrical distribution apprentices. The tools and materials available are more than adequate for training purposes. Apprentices work on industrial standard equipment and materials in a simulated environment. For example, electrical distribution apprentices carry out tasks on a small working substation or reduced-height pylons. Additional resources allow apprentices to practise pole climbing, rescue techniques and trench digging. Apprentices are able to gain valuable experience while working in a safe environment.

11. All training staff are exceptionally well qualified and experienced. They have a high degree of occupational competence and experience in their relevant trade. They all have many other practical and educational qualifications at various levels. Of the seven staff delivering training, five have teaching qualifications and six have training and assessment qualifications. A new member of staff is scheduled to start a course leading to a training and assessment qualification in the near future. Training staff are often required to assist WPD with operational work as and when the need arises, allowing them to keep up to date with knowledge of current practices.

12. The apprentice retention rate is good, with average retention over the past four years remaining at 96 per cent. WPT analyses early leaver destinations and reasons for leaving. These reasons are generally personal or employment related and not connected with the training programme.

13. Achievement rates for academic qualifications are excellent. The current achievement rate is 100 per cent. Apprentices study for their qualifications by open learning, well supported by attendance at regular two-day tutorial sessions, five times a year. A help line is also available to all apprentices on both programmes. WPT also gives additional time for examination revision, and monitoring of progress is good. The open learning validating body contacts WPT when assignments are not handed in on time to prevent apprentices falling behind with their work. Some of the course content for the academic qualifications is also reinforced in theory sessions during the off-the-job training at WPT's training centre. This helps them to relate theory to practical applications in the workplace.

14. Despite such good academic achievement rates, development of key skills has been slow. Staff are not fully aware of the requirements of the modern apprenticeship structure in relation to key skills. Nor are they aware of how to

ensure that apprentices fulfil these requirements. They also lack information about the new key skill qualification process. Apprentices themselves have little or no knowledge of what key skills are, and are generally unaware of the levels of key skills required and how they relate to their modern apprenticeship training.

15. There has been slow progress towards achievement of the NVQ for the electricity distribution and transmission apprentices who started in 1998. These apprentices have not been collecting evidence of their work to the range and standard necessary. This has meant that they are unable to present this evidence for assessment. However, there has been a change of staff since the first intake of apprentices, and all apprentices are now collecting work-based evidence to the standard required.

16. Apprentices are often engaged in a wide variety of workplace activities. However, due to staff's operational duties, opportunities for assessment by observation are missed. Assessment by training staff is only carried out on written evidence which is produced by the apprentice and countersigned by their supervisor.

GENERIC AREAS

Equal opportunities

Grade 3

17. WPD has equal opportunities policies and procedures which meet contractual and legal requirements. One of WPD's human resources managers has responsibility for equal opportunities. The employee relations department controls advertisements for recruitment at WPD's head office. All apprentices receive equal opportunities information as part of their induction programme. At the time of inspection, there were no apprentices with disabilities and four apprentices from minority ethnic backgrounds. The ratio of people in the local area from minority ethnic groups is low, at 0.5 per cent. The training centre has been designed to provide access for people with mobility difficulties. One of the strengths identified in the self-assessment report was agreed with by inspectors and further strengths and weaknesses were identified. The grade given is lower than that awarded by WPD.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ extensive equal opportunities policy
- ◆ clear guidelines for carrying out equal opportunities policies
- ◆ positive staff approach to equal opportunities

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no monitoring of equal opportunities in the workplace
- ◆ insufficient review and evaluation of equal opportunities

- ◆ insufficient staff training in equal opportunities
- ◆ no collection and use of data to improve equal opportunities provision

18. WPT uses WPD's thorough and detailed equal opportunities policies and procedures. A manual has been produced by WPD which systematically covers all aspects of equal opportunities. Separate sections deal with recruitment, induction, discrimination, harassment and grievance procedures. These policies have been fully discussed with trade unions and copies are issued to all employees, including apprentices. They are posted on notice boards and publicised in the company magazine. The employer for whom WPT provides electrical installation training has its own similar equal opportunities policy.

19. There is a set of clear guidelines for carrying out WPD's equal opportunities policy effectively. These cover all aspects of discrimination as well as harassment in the workplace. The guidelines for preventing harassment contain case studies which highlight the consequences of unacceptable behaviour and the rights of apprentices to complain. WPD uses four 'golden rules' to help understanding of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*. These rules encourage staff to consider policy, equipment and the environment from the point of view of disabled people.

20. Staff at WPT have a very positive approach to equal opportunities, and discrimination is not tolerated within the company. Apprentices have positive role models in their supervisors, who act as mentors and do not permit any form of discrimination or harassment. Apprentices have the same terms and conditions as all other employees and are subject to the same regulations.

21. Despite this positive approach to equality of opportunity, there is little structured training in this area. Although equal opportunities is covered at induction, understanding is not tested and apprentices' awareness of the issues is basic. Apprentices' awareness and understanding of equal opportunities are not reinforced during the training programme. The apprentices have little knowledge of their rights and responsibilities under the NVQ appeals procedure.

22. WPT does not monitor equal opportunities in the workplace, nor is it discussed or recorded at reviews. As a consequence, there is little information available to aid the continuous improvement of equal opportunities. While staff have developed an understanding of some of the key issues, there is no structured or planned staff-training programme. However, specialist advice is available through the human resource department of WPD.

Trainee support

Grade 3

23. WPT apprentices are recruited directly by their employers before they start training. Both WPT and the other main electrical contractor involved were once part of the same organisation, and so many aspects of support for apprentices are similar. All applicants to WPT are interviewed and take various ability tests,

including a practical task. All apprentices are employed. The various employers involved carry out a full induction, and an introduction to the training programme itself is carried out at WPT's training centre. All apprentices are assigned a workplace mentor/supervisor and attend regular tutorial sessions to support their open learning programme. Training staff carry out reviews with apprentices both in the training centre and in the workplace. All apprentices also have access to professional counselling and medical services through their respective employers. The self-assessment report identified five strengths which inspectors considered to be parts of one major strength. The weakness indicated in the self-assessment report was considered to be only part of a greater weakness identified by inspectors. Inspectors identified other strengths and weaknesses and awarded the same grade as that given in the self-assessment report.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ thorough apprentice selection process
- ◆ thorough employer induction for apprentices
- ◆ effective pastoral support for apprentices

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no systematic initial assessment of key skills
- ◆ inadequate progress-review process for most apprentices

GOOD PRACTICE

When apprentices attend off-the-job training on a block-release basis, accommodation and transport is arranged and funded by the training provider. If apprentices want to travel on a daily basis, WPT will arrange and pay for a hire car if necessary.

24. Prospective apprentices undergo a thorough selection process, carried out by their prospective employer. Potential apprentices are required to take a number of tests including numeracy, reasoning and psychometric assessment. They also carry out a practical test that is observed by experienced and qualified staff. The results of these tests, together with an interview, are used to decide the applicant's suitability for training. The effectiveness of this process is shown by high apprentice retention rates. Although this selection procedure ensures that apprentices have the potential to cope with the demands of the training programme, insufficient information from the results of the process is fed back to apprentices or detailed on their individual training plans.

25. Employers provide a thorough induction programme for all new apprentices. In the case of the employer who is the electrical contractor, arrangements are made for apprentices to spend a week at a college in the region. WPT inducts its apprentices over a six-week period that includes attendance for a week at an outdoor activity centre. The inductions are thorough and include terms and conditions, health and safety, first aid, manual lifting and outside practical activities such as climbing electricity distribution poles. In all cases, apprentices are well prepared before starting work and their training programme.

26. Apprentices receive effective personal support from both training staff and employers. They are assigned a workplace mentor by their employer. They meet with their mentor on a regular basis to discuss their progress during training and at work. All apprentices commented on the good level of support provided while

working towards completion of their apprenticeships. Apprentices attend regular two-day tutorials, carried out by the open-learning centre staff, which are provided to support their academic qualification studies. Training centre staff are also available to help apprentices with any problems which they may encounter and to increase their learning through theory sessions during off-the-job training. The effectiveness of this support is confirmed by the good achievement rates. Training centre staff also encourage apprentices to seek support from them at any time during their apprenticeship. There are other forms of support available, such as independent counselling or medical services, through the apprentice's employer.

27. WBT's approach to key skills development is inadequate. Apprentices' key skills abilities are not systematically assessed at the start of training. WPT has no way of identifying possible additional needs for key skills training. The individual training plans contain no information of this type which could help the apprentices in achieving their qualifications

28. The progress-review process for the electrical installation apprentices is inadequate. Training staff visit these apprentices on a 12-weekly basis in the workplace, although some visits are behind schedule. The main aim of these visits is to carry out an assessment on witness testimony evidence that the apprentice has collected since the previous visit. Apprentices are also given short-term targets relating to their NVQ during the assessment. Although a short discussion takes place on how the apprentice is generally progressing, the process is brief and no outcomes of this discussion are recorded. The workplace mentor and/or supervisor are sometimes involved in this process, but not on a regular basis. The progress reviews could also benefit from information gained at the formal review by mentors. This is not made available.

Management of training

Grade 3

29. WPT is a trading name for the training section of WPD. WPT has contracts with two TECs for the training of its own modern apprentices in electrical distribution. In addition, the organisation has a contract with these two TECs and another TEC to train modern apprentices in electrical installation for a large electrical contractor. The head office for WPT is based in Taunton, Somerset. The training centre is also located on the Taunton site. On-the-job training is organised by the individual WPD depots. The health and safety training manager has overall responsibility for training. Day-to-day management responsibility lies with the engineering training manager who is supported by seven training and five support staff. Academic courses are provided on an open learning basis with WPT acting as an examination centre. These courses are supported and validated by a college of further education in the north of England. WPT was accredited with the Investor in People award in 1996 and was successfully re-accredited in 1999. The organisation identified five strengths and no weaknesses in its self-assessment report. Inspectors were able to agree with the strengths relating to staff review and development. Two strengths were considered to be no more than normal practice,

and one relating to staff qualifications was moved to the occupational area. Inspectors identified two weaknesses and additional strengths and awarded a lower grade than the one given by WPT.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ good management of health and safety issues
- ◆ strong internal lines of communication
- ◆ effective staff/apprentice review and development process

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no clear strategies for managing modern apprenticeship training
- ◆ insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training

30. WPT has a strong commitment throughout the organisation to providing the highest possible standards of health and safety management. During the induction process, apprentices are given supporting information relating to safe working practices, including certificated first aid courses, fire safety and manual handling courses and other specialist training such as pole rescue techniques. Apprentices are provided with a good range of personal protective equipment. The reinforcement of health and safety practices continues into the practical off-the-job training. Relevant health and safety notices are publicised on virtually every wall in the practical training areas and apprentices show a high level of knowledge of health and safety practices as well as a high regard for the issues involved. A consistently high standard is maintained when apprentices are placed in operational depots. WPT complies with all regulations for entry into areas such as live sub-stations and ensures that no apprentice is given tasks which they have not been trained for, unless they are closely supervised by trained and authorised personnel.

31. The organisation has a strong informal approach to the management of training. Managers and training staff have operational roles in addition to their government-funded training responsibilities which means that they sometimes work in the actual business of electrical distribution. This style of management has resulted in extremely good internal communication links between off-the-job training staff and those responsible for on-the-job elements of the training programme. On a day-to-day basis, staff concerned in training programmes feel able to raise issues as and when they arise. These strong links extend to the major electrical employer for which Western Power Training provides training.

32. All staff at WPT have the opportunity to participate in a staff performance development review. This is a thorough process, which is extended to all apprentices as employees of WPD. A similar arrangement is in place for staff and employed apprentices involved in the modern apprenticeship in electrical installation. Although the performance development review is an annual process, all staff are encouraged to discuss business and personal development opportunities on an ongoing basis. The paperwork is well designed and gives

detailed guidance on the review process, emphasising WPD's aim to encourage continuous professional development. Aims and objectives are agreed during the review process and recorded for future reviews. Staff/apprentice development opportunities have included information technology courses for administrative staff, assessor qualifications and nationally recognised teaching certificates.

33. WPT has plans in the short term for NVQ assessor training, which will provide a number of work-based assessors in the various depots and raise awareness of the requirements of modern apprenticeships. Other plans include the training of internal verifiers for the electrical distribution programme. However, WPT has not identified clear, measurable targets and has no long-term strategies for issues such as key skill development, assessment and accreditation or how work-based assessment will be managed for either of the modern apprenticeship programmes.

34. WPT has a well-planned and well-structured approach to off-the-job training. However, the link between on- and off-the-job training is weak. On-the-job training is provided through work teams based at depots across the south of England. For both programmes, this training is not well structured and is dependent on the nature of the work available at any particular point in time. In the electrical installation programme there are isolated examples of staff organising the on-the-job training to match training activities being carried out at the training centre, but this does not extend to all apprentices in all programmes. There is insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training.

Quality assurance

Grade 3

35. WPT has achieved the international quality assurance standard ISO 9001, which covers the preparation, production and teaching of training courses and the Investors in People award, a national standard for improving an organisation's performance through its people. Currently, there are 58 advanced modern apprentices training towards NVQs in electricity distribution and transmission and electrical installation. WPT no longer provides training for the external electrical company for which it provided training at the time of the original inspection. Therefore, there were no new recruits to the electrical installation programme in 2001. Eight of the 11 learners who started in 1998 and were part of the original inspection have already completed their modern apprenticeship framework. The remaining three are on target to achieve the framework in the near future.

At the original inspection, the main weaknesses identified were:

- ◆ insufficient quality assurance of NVQ programmes
- ◆ no systematic evaluation of training
- ◆ no internal verification of electrical distribution NVQs

36. WPT has made considerable improvements to its quality assurance

arrangements in accordance with the action plan drawn up following the original inspection. Most of the weaknesses have been remedied, although some require further attention. Overall, quality assurance arrangements are now satisfactory. The quality assurance arrangements for NVQ programmes have been improved. Links between on- and off-the-job training are better, which also resolves the weakness relating to insufficient co-ordination of on- and off-the-job training identified at the original inspection in the management of training. The planning, monitoring and recording of training in the workplace is now good. A new computerised progress monitoring system identifies uncompleted units and elements. It is used in conjunction with regular portfolio checks to establish learners' NVQ progress. A newly appointed NVQ co-ordinator ensures that standards are consistent across the NVQ programmes. Regular meetings are held with assessors and mentors. Assessors are observed assessing in the workplace by internal verifiers. An evaluation of training is carried out annually by all involved. Internal verification is now well developed and covers both NVQ programmes, including electricity distribution and transmission. At the time of the original inspection, the self-assessment report failed to identify some key weaknesses and inspectors awarded a grade lower than that given in the self-assessment report. The self-assessment report used for reinspection did not have any strengths or weaknesses identified for quality assurance and no grade was awarded by WPT.

STRENGTHS

- ◆ significant range of successful quality assurance initiatives introduced
- ◆ effective use of work-based assessors
- ◆ good monitoring of learners' NVQ progress

WEAKNESSES

- ◆ no cohesive quality assurance framework for modern apprenticeship programmes
- ◆ incomplete observations of training
- ◆ incomplete self-assessment process

37. WPT staff have a positive approach to providing good-quality training. Most of the training staff, mentors and assessors are former learners with the company and use that experience to the benefit of current learners.

38. There have been significant improvements in quality assurance arrangements since the original inspection. An NVQ co-ordinator has been appointed to ensure that high standards are maintained for all learners, who are located over a wide geographical area. At least one annual workshop is held for assessors and mentors to share good practice and ensure consistency. The NVQ co-ordinator visits each WPD depot to meet with mentors and assessors, updating them with any changes. However, records of these meetings consist only of a list of topics covered. Discussions or feedback from staff at the depots is not recorded. Links between on- and off-the-job training have improved. All staff involved in training in the

workplace are informed of the topics covered in off-the-job training and ensure that these are related to work activities within an appropriate timescale. The views of learners and staff involved in training are now collected and any issues are dealt with promptly. In addition, learners' comments are noted at the end of each block of off-the-job training. At present, there is no overall analysis of views to improve the quality of training or to contribute to the self-assessment report.

39. WPT now has 13 qualified work-based assessors. There are plans to train 15 more. As a result, assessment will be improved. Because the contact with the other electrical company is coming to an end, training centre staff still assess their learners, rather than train their staff to do work-based assessments.

40. There has been considerable improvement in monitoring learners' NVQ progress. WPT has devised a useful monitoring system which is also accessible to all learners, mentors and assessors in the WPD depots. Mentors update any work-based assessments and training centre staff update unit achievements. Everyone involved can compare the progress of learners against those at other depots. Management can monitor and compare assessors' progress. The system also identifies when progress reviews are due and any delays in carrying them out. Assessments for the remaining learners from the other electrical company are still monitored manually. Key skills training was planned to start the week after reinspection. Progress on key skills training will be monitored manually as it is intended that all three key skills will be completed in one week in the training centre.

41. Although WPT has achieved the ISO 9001 quality assurance standard, this does not include the full modern apprenticeship framework. There is no cohesive framework covering the whole modern apprenticeship programme. There are procedures for NVQ assessment, appeals and internal verification. A new procedure has recently been devised covering the progress review process. Many other key activities, such as the recruitment of modern apprentices, initial assessment, programme evaluation and self-assessment, do not have set procedures.

42. The number of internal verifiers has been increased to seven, to allow observation of workplace assessments. WPT training staff in the training centre are also observed, but there is no assessment of the training given by one of the main subcontractors. Records of observations focus on the training element but does not refer to the level of attainment. The record form does not provide information on actions required, or for signing off completed assignments. There is no analysis of the outcomes of observations or identification of staff training needs.

43. The self-assessment process is not fully developed. The second self-assessment report, which was used as the basis for reinspection, did not identify any strengths and weaknesses and did not award a grade for quality assurance. It simply detailed the progress made with those weaknesses identified at the original inspection. The action plan does not match the self-assessment report and does not

have dates for monitoring progress against actions identified. There is insufficient use of statistical evidence. Training staff, mentors and assessors had little involvement in the self-assessment process and did not receive a copy of the report when it was completed. As a result, most were unaware of its content, which was the situation at the original inspection. The self-assessment report has now been placed on the staff intranet and there are plans to bring this to the attention of staff.